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HHHS deficit adds to 'already stressful times'

by SUE TIFFIN
Editor

The following are brief reports from the Haliburton Highlands Health Services board meeting held virtually on Dec. 2.

When giving a financial overview, David O'Brien, vice-chair of the board and chair of the finance committee, noted "two very large numbers facing us right now."

"We're experiencing a second very challenging year with a deficit of about \$613,000 as of Sept. 30," he said. "Similar to last year, ongoing staffing pressures of about \$350,000 and total lost revenue from Ministry of Health sources of about \$372,000 explain the majority of the unfavourable variance to date."

"In addition, we're experiencing cashflow issues," he said. "Like all hospitals we have not received our reimbursements for COVID-related expenses since the end of February of this year, and those expenses are now approaching \$3 million."

O'Brien said COVID expenses are approved separately and reviewed by the province.

see FUNDING page 3



Horsin' around for holiday photos

Three-year-old Everli Bain of Minden, sitting on Boomerang the practice pony, waits patiently while Eli the horse gets a closer look during a photo fun session at Walkabout Farm in Minden on Dec. 1. /Photo by Jennifer Semach

Snow plow crisis in the making

by STEVE GALEA
Special to the Times

Slip-and-fall lawsuits in Toronto and other urban areas are not just costly to the

businesses and property owners directly involved. They are also having an indirect effect on snow plow operators in Haliburton County and the rest of Ontario, in terms of increased insurance premiums and, in some cases, loss of coverage.

In fact, significant rate increases, combined with rising operating costs, have caused some long-time snow plow operators to shut down operations, leaving customers scrambling to find businesses willing to take on more work.

see CRITICAL page 4

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Season's greetings



Shining light on Oxtongue Lake

Scott Hayden, seen here with Algonquin Highlands Councillor Jennifer Dailloux, was the official tree lighter at the Oxtongue Lake Community Centre tree lighting on Friday, Dec. 3. Last year the event was virtual, but this year it was offered to the public with COVID safety protocols in place. /Photos submitted by Sandra Rogers, recreation co-ordinator for the township of Algonquin Highlands



After the tree at the Oxtongue Lake Community Centre was lit, community members joined to sing carols around the bonfire.



A festive scene brought the community together on Dec. 3 at the Oxtongue Lake community centre after the tree had been lit and carolers joined under the pavilion and around the bonfire to celebrate the season.



An honour and achievement

Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps 1129 Haliburton Lieutenant Max Ward, far left, accepted its Cadet League Trophy in memory of Colonel William A. Maddox for being named the Top Small Army Cadet Corps in Central Ontario Region from Captain Rick Brown with 1129 Haliburton's Lieutenant Greg Powell. / Photo submitted by Max Ward

Wrapped in Courage campaign supported in Minden Hills

Minden Hills has joined other communities across Ontario in supporting an awareness campaign to end gender-based violence.

The Wrapped in Courage campaign has asked women shelters and municipalities throughout Ontario to raise a purple flag “to remind everyone that now more than ever, violence continues to be the greatest inequality rights issue for women and girls.”

The campaign, now in its ninth year, typically asks the public to wear a purple scarf symbolizing the courage it takes to seek support and safety from violence to “show support for survivors who’ve had to endure gender-based violence in their homes, communities and workplaces.”

A flag was raised at the Minden Hills township office in November, and will fly until Dec. 13.

“Each flag raising signals a commitment to ending gender-based violence in our community and to ensuring survivors know they are not alone,” said Julie Garvin, YWCA Peterborough Haliburton. “YWCA Women’s Centre of Haliburton County and Haliburton Emergency Rural SafeSpace (HERS) provide vital safety and support services to survivors of gender-based violence and their children.”

November is Women Abuse Prevention Month, and Nov. 25, when Minden Hills council was asked to raise the flag by YWCA Peterborough Haliburton, is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

“Gender-based violence is an often invis-

ible issue, and many women and gender-diverse individuals may not be aware of the services that are available in their community,” said Garvin. “Every Ontarian has a key role to play when it comes to addressing gender-based violence and preventing femicide.”

To learn more, visit www.ywcahaliburton.org or call 705-286-1942.



As part of the Wrapped in Courage campaign, a purple flag raising awareness of gender-based violence will fly at the Minden Hills township office until Dec. 13. /NICK BERNARD Staff

Funding challenges are 'particularly onerous' on rural hospitals

from page 1

“We’re going to continue to have serious issues going forward in the year, I don’t know what the third quarter numbers are going to look like but they’re not going to be pretty, for sure,” he said. “We will continue to work with our funding agencies to help them understand our challenges. These challenges are particularly onerous on a small rural hospital. All hospitals are facing these kinds of issues, obviously, but they’re particularly onerous on small rural hospitals who have very limited sources of external revenue that they can depend upon.”

O’Brien thanked staff, including CEO Carolyn Plummer, doctors, nurses, healthcare professionals, and those working at the hospital for their work.

“We are working under severely difficult and stressful times,” he said. “Our financial issues do nothing more than add to the already stressful times.”

Plans for emergency department closure ongoing

A decision on which emergency department in the county will see a service reduction has not yet been made.

“First, patient and staff safety has been and will continue to be at the forefront of our discussions and analysis,” Plummer later told the Echo. “We will also continue to be led by our values of compassion, accountability, integrity, and respect. To make the difficult decision about which ED may have to reduce services, we are considering: typical volumes of patient visits to each emergency department; current staff schedules, gaps, and staffing models; the geographic location of each emergency department in relation to communities across Haliburton County; and feedback from our partners, including but not limited to the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health East, and Haliburton County Paramedic Service.”

In the meantime, Plummer said a service reduction is still trying to be avoided, with attempt to recruit permanent staff or temporary staff.

“But we know the staffing shortage we’re experiencing is definitely significant across the entire province, so we do have to plan for all circumstances and be prepared for all circumstances,” she said. Once it is decided which site will experience potential closures, Plummer said the public will be informed at least 48 hours prior to the closure. “While our emergency departments typically see their greatest volumes during the summer months, visits also increase during the fall and winter as respiratory illnesses circulate in the community,” she told the Echo. “With this in mind, and with the recent rise in COVID-19 cases, we strongly en-

courage community members to follow public health measures, including frequent handwashing, wearing a face mask in public spaces, and maintaining social/physical distancing. We will continue to do everything we can to recruit new staff, support our existing staff, and engage with staffing agencies to help fill gaps until more staff can be hired.”

HHHS preparing for Omicron

Plummer said that just when it started to look like pandemic-related challenges were slowing down, the new variant of concern has caused “heightened awareness.”

Measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have continued, though with the news of the Omicron variant, Plummer said there are changes to screening questions, specifically asking about travel.

Plummer spoke to the outbreak of student cases related to a bus route, which at press time involved five students from SBES and JDHES.

“We have been seeing some increased volume of cases in our community, and an increased volume of folks looking for testing at our assessment centre,” said Plummer.

To date, HHHS staff has a rate of 97.4 per cent for those who are fully vaccinated or have had at least one dose of the vaccine and are being tested regularly.

“I think everybody’s really hoping this will end soon,” she said.

Long-term care changes welcomed

Plummer spoke to proposed changes to long-term care legislation, noting the *Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors, and Building More Beds Act, 2021*, which if passed would repeal the current *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007*, and create the *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021*.

The proposed bill includes an increased focus on direct care hours available per resident, which has been announced previously, different compliance and enforcement tools, a bigger focus on improved infection prevention and control and a focus on quality improvement for LTCs.

HHHS manages two long-term care facilities – Hyland Crest and Highland Wood – and Plummer said they were welcoming the revised legislation.

“Hopefully that will lead to some more positive changes in that sector, something we’ve been certainly advocating for some time, and will continue to do so,” she said.

Foot care program returns

Plummer’s report to the board noted that community clients “are very excited about the return of the foot care program.”

The wait list had included more than 250 people, who have all been contacted for appointments. The program is being offered at the HHHS Minden site, and will be reopening at the Haliburton location soon.

COVID-19 CONTACTS, CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS, AND DEATHS BY COUNTY								
County	Current Cases Not Resolved	Current High Risk Contacts	Current Probable Cases	Confirmed Cases (Total to date)	Confirmed Cases Resolved (Total to Date)	Hospitalizations (Total to date)	Confirmed Deaths (Total to date)	Probable Deaths (Total to date)
Haliburton	5	89	0	160	154	4	1	0
Kawartha Lakes	26	125	2	1,365	1,294	55	45	13
Northumberland	11	58	2	1,072	1,044	41	17	0
Total***	42	285	4	2,597	2,492	100	63	13

Outbreak declared at JDHES

One new case of COVID-19 was reported in Haliburton County on Monday, Dec. 6, for a total of five active cases in the county. An outbreak of cases involving students who rode a school bus together resulted in the closure of a classroom at Stuart Baker Elementary School last week and now a J.D.Hodgson Elementary School classroom. /Screenshot from HKPRDHU website



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(VIRTUAL) COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted virtually via web conference meetings, until further notice. Meetings begin at 9:00 AM unless otherwise noted. The schedule of upcoming meetings are:

December 9 – Regular Council and Public Meetings and 2nd Round of the 2022 Budget Deliberations

Please note Council Meetings are reduced to one (1) meeting a month in December.

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by joining a live-stream link available on the township website at www.minden hills.ca/council/ or by using the direct link provided in the notice. Meeting agendas are not displayed during the meeting, please download by visiting our website at www.minden hills.ca/council/.

Please note the live-stream link provided for each meeting will only be activated while Council is in session.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Decorate Safely

- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant”
- If using a live tree, cut off about 2 inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it and remove it from your home when it is dry
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways
- Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower tree branches where small children can reach them
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections
- Follow the package directions on the number of lights sets that can be plugged into one socket
- Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We are currently looking to fill a variety of positions within the Township. Many opportunities include benefits such as enrollment in a comprehensive benefit package, Employee Assistance Plan, life insurance, personal health coverage, OMERS pension plan, vacation, float and sick time entitlements as well as opportunities for training and development.

Please visit our website at www.minden hills.ca/employment-opportunities/ or email sprentice@minden hills.ca for a list of available jobs and how to apply.

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LOW WASTE HOLIDAY SEASON

Try giving experiences as gifts this year. Why not gift an Ontario Parks Day Use Permit or a membership to the Minden Cultural Centre? If you aren't sure what experience they may like, consider making a donation to a charitable organization in their name.



Tom Prentice & Sons Trucking has provided snow removal services for approximately 30 years. Prentice said plowing businesses are stretched as a result of insurance cost increases. /Photos submitted



Critical snow removal services hard to find due to 'insurance crisis'

from page 1

Jim Love, of Miner's Bay, experienced the fallout from the insurance crisis plaguing the plowing business in mid-October, when the snow plow operator he had contracted for many years told him that he would be closing his business this year.

"He told me he couldn't afford to plow this year. I asked why and he said, 'the insurance is killing me' and he quoted an insane number. He tried to find someone else to take over the business and he couldn't. This was more than just a financial thing. He didn't want to let me and other customers down."

Having snow removal services is critical to him, as it is to many who live in Haliburton County. Love, who lives a full kilometre from the nearest plowed road, said it has never been easy to get that service.

"It's hard work. These people get up early and work long days. Not a lot of people want to do this."

Luckily, he found a new plow operator relatively quickly, but prior to that considered purchasing his own plow and truck.

"We're not rich but we have the means to do this ... And I started thinking what about all those poor people who can't afford this? What will they do?"

Tom Prentice of Tom Prentice & Sons Trucking has provided snow removal services for approximately 30 years. He says it is the mainstay of his business in winter and is what allows the company to keep their employees working year-round.

His company plows more than 100 properties each day, which include businesses around Minden, residences, and on Thursdays and Fridays, cottages and cottage access roads so their owners can visit their properties on the weekends.

"Last year my insurance company forewarned us that this was coming," he said. "There were increases last year. It will be increasing again this year."

Right about that same time, Tony DiGiovanni, executive director of Landscape Ontario, an organization that also advocates for snow and ice removal trades, declared, "We are in the midst of an insurance crisis."

At that time, DiGiovanni reported receiving calls from concerned business owners across the province who could no longer get insurance for their snow and ice removal operations. Others reported their insurance rates had doubled or tripled, while deductibles also increased.

"The quantity of lawsuits, probably encouraged by relentless advertisements, has resulted in many insurance companies pull-

ing out of providing winter service coverage," DiGiovanni said at the time. "With no coverage, there will be no service. This is an extremely serious issue that will affect every member of the public."

"I recently heard an insurance spokesperson on a radio show say that even if a lawsuit wasn't successful, for every dollar the insurance company charged us, they needed to pay \$1.14 in legal costs," said Prentice. "So they adjusted their rates accordingly."

He said his company's insurance increased by a significant amount for the five plows they run. Asked if these costs will be passed on to customers, he replied, "It still has to be worked out. We did not entirely recoup costs last year. The number of snow plow times were down."

Prentice said that the plowing business can be difficult to plan for in the best of times.

"It is hard to predict how any winter will go," he said. "You can't say for certain how many visits your plows will have to make. I can see why some guys threw in the towel."

At press time, he knows of three operators that have stopped plowing services. He says plowing businesses are already stretched and notes that the loss of these services will mean customers will have an even harder time finding people to clear driveways and do snow removal.

"We're turning down a lot of plowing jobs," he said. "Our drivers can only legally work 13-hour days."

He says the people who will be affected most by the loss of plow operators will be those who have come here during the pandemic who have not yet established a relationship with a snow removal and plowing service, as well as those customers who have recently lost their plow operators and are currently looking for a new one.

Snow plow and snow removal services are often dragged into slip-and-fall lawsuits regardless of if they were even there at the time of the incident.

Prior to last January, people were permitted to enact a slip-and-fall lawsuit for up to two years after the incident. This left a wide window open for lawsuits that were, on occasion, regarding incidents that were previously unknown by the parties being sued or whose details were largely forgotten by those targeted. Lawsuits with these lengthy time lags also made it difficult for snow plow operators to defend themselves in court.

Last January, however, Bill 118 was passed. That legislation made changes to Ontario's *Occupiers' Liability Act* that barred any action for personal injury damages caused by snow or ice conditions against an occupier or independent contractor employed to remove snow or ice from the premises when the injury occurred, to within 60 days, with some exceptions.

Landscape Ontario applauded the bill and noted in a press release, "The changes will unquestionably result in a reduced number of

claims and insurance payouts. They will also hopefully, over time, result in reduced premiums for contractors."

Whether that happens still remains to be seen.

Global factors are also influencing insurance rates. In 2019 and 2020 and, insurance claims, much related to climate change, rose globally to \$160 billion dollars, which is equal to the cumulative total in the previous six years. These costs have also trickled down to consumers.

Prentice would like to see the law changed so that people involved in slip-and-fall incidents should have to report the incident immediately, if they want to proceed with a lawsuit. He feels this would allow all parties involved to have better recollection of the conditions and services rendered that day and perhaps reduce frivolous lawsuits.

In the meantime, depending on snowfall, this could be a winter in which more driveways and private roads remain snow covered for longer. Aside from preventing people from going to work, visiting their seasonal residences or shopping, it could also present challenges to emergency services, fuel delivery and other essential services.

Love has written to MPP Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock) to voice his concern.

He said, "I'm ticked. Plowing is not an option. It is a necessity."



Blizzard wizard

Minden Hills township snow plow clears a rural road in Minden Hills township on the morning of Dec. 7 following a weekend of wintry weather that resulted in a school snow day on Dec. 6. /TIMES Staff

Medical officer of health offers guidance for holiday season

by SUE TIFFIN
Editor

The following are brief reports from a Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District health unit media briefing held virtually on Dec. 2.

Dr. Natalie Bocking, HKPR medical officer of health, said she has asked about her guidance for the upcoming holiday season as COVID-19 cases rise in the province and with the news of Omicron, a newly identified variant of concern.

“What I want to really emphasize today is that the individual and community choices we make today regarding preventive measures we take for COVID-19 is what’s going to determine our case load in a couple of weeks from now,” said Bocking. “Right now we know that our cases are increasing. We’re seeing more outbreaks, we’re seeing more cases among elementary school children and associated activities. And if we continue with all of our same behaviours right now, we’re going to continue to see these cases go up. So we have an opportunity before our numbers continue to rise significantly to start to re-evaluate some of the day-to-day behaviours that we have.”

Bocking said this means that those feeling sick should stay home, and those feeling sick and experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested.

“I think that there’s likely virus circulating in the community that we’re not seeing because people are not being tested, and there’s certainly access and opportunity to get tested so that people are able to make informed decisions about the types of activities that they’re doing,” she said.

If people are meeting at indoor gatherings with individuals from outside their household or who are not vaccinated, Bocking said masks should be worn. Gatherings should be kept to smaller sizes.

“The more we see larger gatherings and opportunity for virus to spread, we’ll continue to see it,” she said.

By the numbers

To date, across the region, 2,571 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 35 active cases as of Dec. 1 – four of those being in Haliburton County – and 174 high-risk contacts have been recorded. Three ongoing outbreaks were reported – one among a school bus cohort in Haliburton County, one affecting seven patients at Campbellford Memorial Hospital, and one at a workplace in Brighton. The incidence rate, Bocking said, was 18 cases per 100,000.

“I want to highlight that this is actually double the incidence rate reported last week,” she said. “We’ve started to see and I think we’ll continue to see an increase in COVID-19 activity.”

The test positivity rate was 1.5 per cent, while the reproductive number – an indication of the number of other people who will become infected by those positive cases – was above one.

“Which indicates potential for a fairly increased spread among the community,” said Bocking.

She noted that there have been 36 cases among the school population and school staff throughout the region since September, and that other than the bus cohort outbreak, there have not been school-related outbreaks.

“However, in the last week alone, we have had 12 of those 36 cases identified among school-aged or staff associated with schools. To me, this really indicates that we’re seeing increased activity in a number of different settings, and that we’re continuing to see it among younger age groups and school-aged children.”

In the last 14 days, Bocking said there have been 50 new cases: 32 per cent of those don’t have an identifiable source, 20 per cent are household contacts, and 16 per cent were considered close contacts.

Vaccination roll-out update

Among the population in the health unit area aged 12 and over, 86.9 per cent have received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, and 84.4 per cent have received two doses.

“

...the individual and community choices we make today regarding preventive measures we take for COVID-19 is what’s going to determine our case load in a couple of weeks from now

— DR. NATALIE BOCKING

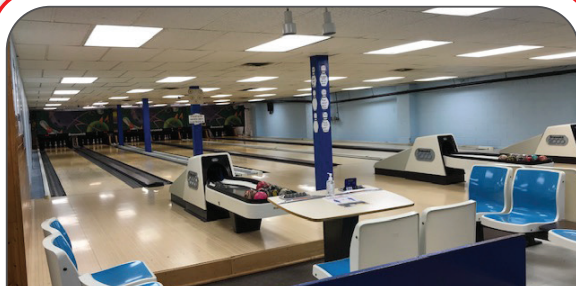
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cine, and 84.4 per cent have received two doses.

“We do continue to see a very small incremental increase in those 12 and over still getting their first dose,” she said. She continued encouraging those who haven’t had a first dose to receive it.

“Vaccination continues to be the number one preventative measure that we can take right now as an individual and as a community to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and help prevent the severe outcomes associated with COVID-19 that we see, especially among our older population,” she said.

To date, more than 1,000 residents aged five to 11 in the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge district health unit had already received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, with 11,000 being eligible. Bocking said there is capacity across the region for every child that’s eligible to receive their first vaccine prior to the end of the year through clinics, their primary care teams and pharmacies.



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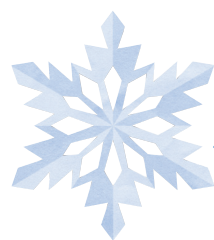
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Courage

QUIETLY LAST month, a purple flag was raised at the Minden Hills township office to support women and raise awareness of gender-based violence. That violence often occurs without many of us knowing, too, but it happens daily in homes throughout our county to women we know, work with and live alongside.

One in three women will experience gender-based violence in their lifetime, and last year in Ontario, every 13 days a woman or child was killed by a man known to them – numbers that are much higher for Black women, Indigenous women and women of colour, and numbers that are higher due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted in more barriers for survivors to access support and services.

The list of women who died by femicide over the past year in Ontario was released on Dec. 1 and includes 58 names of victims ranging in age from two to 89. That's a 52.6 per cent increase in the number of femicide victims recorded by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses in the past year. Most commonly, femicide victims were killed by their intimate partners or family members.

On Dec. 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, results of a 16-month CBC investigation analyzing 392 cases of the 488 intimate-partner homicides that occurred across Canada between Jan. 2015 and June 2020 were published. Findings from that investigation show that at least one warning sign prior to the murder existed in more than a third of cases, the most common of those signs being recent separations, exercising coercive control over the victim, and previous reports to police.

Every day, Violence Against Women shelters and programming are essential spaces specifically designed for the safety of women and children who are survivors of abuse and violence. On the outside, they appear quiet – you might walk or drive by the YWCA Haliburton

Emergency Rural SafeSpace each day without paying much attention to it.

On the inside, work is being done to support women by providing help to find safe, affordable housing, navigate the justice system, support children through community-based children's services, and offer a safe space to stay away from abusive and violent situations.

Our local SafeSpace has been fully occupied since January 2021, and the team there has experienced more than a 20 per cent increase in the number of women requiring transition support services.

The Wrapped in Courage campaign, which aims to raise awareness of gender-based violence, recommends 16 actions to end violence against women and prevent femicide. Among those actions, it's recommended that we contact Laurie Scott, our local MPP, by phone or email to ask for more support in ending gender-based violence within our community, volunteer or donate to our

local shelter, and challenge harmful stereotypes and myths that perpetuate gender inequality.

While the emphasis is so often on women taking the first step, and having the courage to escape an abusive situation, it takes an entire community to offer support for that first step to be easier and more realistic to take. Becoming more aware of gender-based violence is a first step we can all take.

For more information or to donate online, visit ywcahaliburton.org. Donations made before midnight on Dec. 31 will be matched dollar for dollar by a group of generous supporters from Haliburton County and Peterborough.

A 24-hour support and crisis line is available if you would like to speak to someone about your options, are concerned about your safety or your children's safety, need someone to talk to, or are ready to leave and wonder if there's a safe place to go. Call 1-800-461-7656 or text 705-991-0110.

**SUE TIFFIN**
Editor

Kwarky



Kim Wark

"It's artisinal snow; Santa has supply chain issues."

Digging deeper

I WAS RAISED Catholic, so confession is nothing new to me. Even so, there are things I would still hesitate to divulge within the confines of a confessional, partly because I would feel too much shame and embarrassment confessing them to a priest.

Fortunately, as regular readers of this column know, I have no shame or embarrassment when a deadline is looming.

So here is my confession. Sometimes after the first snowfall, my thoughts turn to making a snow shelter – and actually spending a night in one. And, I'm ashamed and embarrassed to say, this happens every year.

Ideally, that shelter would be an igloo. I'm talking about a perfectly circular one that is so beautiful it could be in an Inuit issue of *Better Homes and Gardens*.

What generally happens, however, is that I get to the part where the curvature of the wall starts to get severe. That's when it invariably collapses and I say to myself, "On the other hand, a quinzhee would be nice too."

If you are unfamiliar with a quinzhee, it is essentially just a big pile of snow that has settled enough so that you can dig a shelter inside of it. Quinzhee, I suspect, is an Inuit word for failed igloo.

Clearly, this fantasy of spending a night outside in a snow shelter is nothing to be proud of. I know this because of a conversation I had with my best friend Tom last year around this time when the mood struck.

Steve: Hey Tom. I'm thinking of doing a little winter camping.

Tom: Oh God, you're not thinking of sleeping outside in a snow fort again, are you?

Steve: It's a quinzhee, Tom.

Tom: Your igloo already collapsed?

(Long, awkward silence, in which I am embarrassed for myself, and Tom is embarrassed for me.)

Steve: Anyhoo ... I'm working on a quinzhee, and I am seriously considering sleeping in it tonight. The temperature is only

supposed to go down to minus 10 with the windchill.

Tom: Did you and Jenn have a really bad argument?

Steve: No. I just want to do this.

Tom: Apologize to her. Roses and a bottle of wine might also help.

Steve: It's not like that. We're getting along just fine. Heck, I even invited her to spend the night in my quinzhee with me.

Tom: Apologize to her. Roses and a bottle of wine might also help.

Steve: So, you think this is a bad idea?

Tom: You have a warm bed in your house, right? And a fully functional furnace?

Steve: Yes.

Tom: Is anyone daring you or paying you large sums of money to do this? Has some sadist kidnapped your kids and will only release them on this condition?

Steve: No.

Tom: Are you hearing little voices inside your head again?

Steve: No.

Tom: So, there is no logical reason for doing this?

Steve: I want to prove I can. I need to know in case I find myself in a survival situation where a quinzhee is required and an igloo is not.

Tom: The last time you did this, you snuck back in the house at 9 p.m.

Steve: I think I can do better this time.

Tom: I should hope so. You only entered your snow fort at 8:45 p.m.

Steve: It's a quinzhee ...

Tom: Sure it is. So, to recap: you could sleep in a nice warm bed, or you could choose to sleep in a snow fort until just after 9 p.m. and sneak sheepishly into the house, half-frozen and embarrassed by your failure.

Steve: There is no embarrassment in trying.

Tom: You are a grown man, wanting to sleep in a snow fort.

Of course, he's wrong about that. It's a quinzhee ...

**STEVE GALEA**
Beyond 35

IN OTHER WORDS

Columns and Letters to the Editor

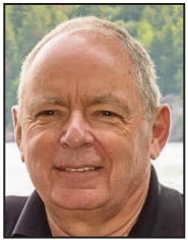
Hitting my mung

WE'RE ALL scanning the dark clouds of COVID-19 for a silver lining – a silvery puff to float us above the anguish of this nightmare disease and the madness it has brought.

I've found mine. It's called 'hitting mung.' Sounds crazy but no crazier than the craziness devouring our world.

Mung are beans that Taoists used as a natural medicine. They would fill a sock with mung and use it as a club to beat tendons and muscles in their legs and arms. They believed this helped to repair injured parts and strengthen others.

South Koreans have given hitting mung a different twist. To them it is a slang expression meaning to reach a state of total blankness. Zoning out completely and rising above the mad world of COVID.



JIM POLING SR.

From Shaman's Rock

The Japanese also have been studying the art of zoning out and promote sitting in a forest as good medicine. They call it shinrin-yoku, which means taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing.

Hitting mung has become so popular in South Korea that there are places where you pay to sit and do nothing. You pay to sit on a chair or blanket and stare over a pond. Or into a forest, or a campfire. No talking, no music, no cellphones, no noise, period. Just staring.

If the weather turns nasty, hitting mung can be achieved in a movie theatre. 'Flight,' a film simulating a 40-minute airplane ride through the clouds is available in theatres across the country. It is advertised as a chance to "take a brief rest through the fluffy clouds."

A ticket to sit and pretend you are flying through the clouds costs roughly \$10 Canadian.

'Flight' is a sequel to 'Fire Mung,' which is 31 minutes of footage of a flaming campfire.

Hitting mung sounded like a great escape, so I took it up seriously. I am known to be a bit frugal, however, so I'm not paying for my hitting mung sessions. I simply walk into the woods behind our place, sit, stare and do nothing. Absolutely nothing.

The forest is the best place to hit your mung. I thought about staring into a campfire, or out onto the lake, but decided that would just bring back bad memories of last summer's wildfires, and the recent floods out West.

Trees make it easier to blank out your bad thoughts and anxieties because they are totally open-minded and relaxed. They live together happily, not discriminating because of species, size or colour.

The mighty oaks don't look down on their weak and pulpy poplar neighbours. The gorgeous green balsams don't snigger at the tamaracks turning yellow just before Christmas when people are paying big bucks for evergreens.

Trees are well rooted so they don't run about hysterically like we humans. Sure, they may sway and moan when things get really windy but overall, they are calm and quiet creatures.

They remind me of mothers. They are nurturers, providing shelter and food to insects, birds and small animals. They don't get the respect they deserve sometimes but they don't complain.

The common sense and mothering aspects of trees is seen occasionally in human populations. One example is the calm and caring approach taken toward the pandemic by women.

During the early days of COVID-19 women leaders like New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, Germany's Angela Merkel, Finland's Sanna Marin, and Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen certainly outperformed macho male poster boys Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Boris Johnson and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro.

Meanwhile, hitting mung is believed to be good for your body as well as your mind. Research indicates that chemicals released by forest plants boost human immune systems.

Family and friends don't understand my enthusiasm for hitting mung. They can't fathom how just staring and doing nothing for 45 minutes or an hour is healthy.

So, I don't tell anyone when I go into the forest to hit my mung. I just sneak away quietly, perhaps carrying an axe, chainsaw or anything that makes it look like I am going out to work.

I know that if I told them what I was really going to do, someone would suggest that time spent hitting mung could be spent more beneficially hitting the woodpile. Or the snow shovel.



Time for a rest

A snowfall covered an otherwise cozy spot to sit. /Photo submitted by Guenter Horst

letters to the editor

"A lot of good people out there"

To the Editor:

I am trying to find and thank a few motorists that stopped at my single vehicle accident scene (Silverado truck rollover) at Deep Bay Rd. and Rackety Trail on Sunday, Nov. 28 afternoon.

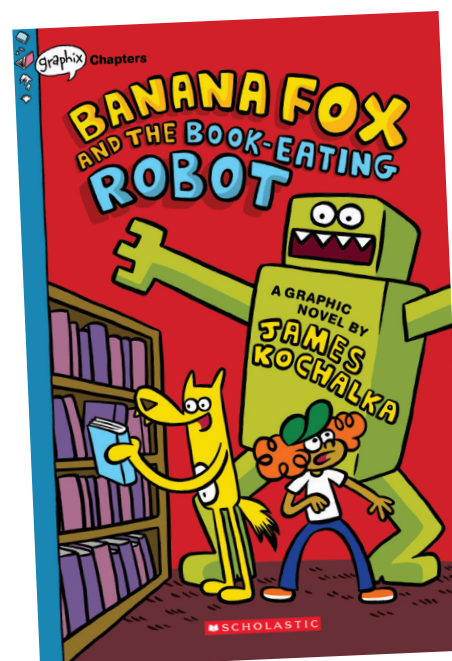
The first two gentlemen at the scene that I would like to thank would be the guy with the red jacket that pulled some brush away from my face and used a blanket to help stop the bleeding from a nasty laceration I received, and talked me through the wait for paramedics and firemen to arrive. Another guy that stopped helped stabilize

my vehicle from possibly rolling over on me by using ratchet straps and rope. He drove a truck with "Guru Renovations" on it. A big thank you to you guys!

Thanks should also be given to the Minden/Haliburton paramedics and Minden Hills Fire Department that wasted no time getting me out of the wreck. And I'd like to thank the staff at Minden emerg for the great care I received.

**Jim Cius
Minden**

HCPL's Jr. Book of the Month - December



Banana fox is at it again!

In this newest installment from James Kochalka and Graphix Chapters, Banana Fox's late fees have landed him in library jail! When a familiar foe is found around town and a giant book-eating robot is unleashed, it looks like Banana Fox's friends and apprentice detectives Flashlight and William will need to step in to save the day. The junior detectives put their heads together, but when their investigation runs cold, an unlikely hero emerges to prove his own sleuthing skills. With Banana Fox out of commission, can the untrained trio put Sour Grapes Jr. behind bars for good?

Graphix Chapters graphic novels are ideal books for beginning and newly independent readers. With approachable page counts, easy-to-follow paneling, and artwork that supports text comprehension, these engaging stories with unforgettable characters help children become lifelong readers. Check out the adventures of Banana Fox, and many other graphic novels

from Haliburton County Public Library today!.

Pick an emotion, any emotion

MENTAL HEALTH is a big issue many people are dealing with and it's a tough topic to talk or write about. I have had many lows throughout my life. I've sat on a couch and worked through emotional challenges with several therapists. My last therapist talked about putting tools in my mental health tool belt that I could use to get out of the emotional holes I would fall into. I loved that analogy because it involved action on my part.

I haven't been to a therapist in several years. I have found that, like physical fitness, emotional fitness is an ongoing process. For me, reading self-improvement type books has made a huge difference in my life. My favourites include:

- *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle
- *The Untethered Soul* by Michael Singer
- Any book by Brene Brown
- *You are a Badass* by Jen Sincero

In addition to reading, I write every day. I fill three pages by hand as I enjoy my first coffee of the day. I write about things that are bothering me but mostly I write about how grateful I am to be living my life. It used to be the other way around but years of self-reflection and perseverance have made all the difference.

• If I was to share one of the tools from my mental health tool belt it would be the ability to stay in the moment. Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* covers the topic extensively but I would have to say that this quote by Lao Tzu says it best:

"If you are depressed, you are living

in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace, you are living in the present."

Staying in the moment is challenging. It can take a lot of work but sometimes it can be so simple. As an example, I was having a conversation with a client the other day. We got talking about mental health and the various coping skills that can help when we're going through uncertain times (like we have been since the start of the pandemic).

The day before our workout, he had done a full workout on his own (not a regular occurrence). I asked if he felt empowered after completing that workout. After a thoughtful pause he said that he had. It was right then that it occurred to me that we cannot feel two emotions at one time. This was a "light bulb" moment for me. If we're feeling em-

powered we can't feel sad or helpless.

Here's my question: can we successfully navigate these crazy tough times through the power of choice? I believe we can. First there's choosing an activity that can leave us feeling fulfilled, empowered, inspired, motivated, etc. Then there's the choice of embracing that glorious feeling instead of letting it pass by without any recognition. The choice is yours.

Something to think about.

Laurie Sweig is a certified personal fitness trainer and spinning instructor. She owns and operates The Point for Fitness. She can be reached at laurie@thepointforfitness.com.



LAURIE SWEIG
Practical Fitness



Fill-a-Cruiser collects in Minden

Auxiliary constable Denver Allore watches someone making a cash donation as auxiliary constable Jesse Davis loads bags of donations into the back of the cruiser. The constables were visiting Dollo's Foodland during the afternoon on Dec. 4. /NICK BERNARD Staff



From left, auxiliary constables Jesse Davis, Garrett Harrison, and Denver Allore stand in front of their cruiser with bags of food donations headed for the Minden Food Bank. The auxiliary constables were out as part of the OPP's Fill-A-Cruiser event in Minden.

Digital Content and Direct to Production Services Become a Preferred Vendor

The **Ministry of Government and Consumer Services** seeks proposals from experienced, highly qualified vendors to provide Branded Digital Content Creation and Direct to Production Services to Ontario government ministries and agencies. Only Preferred Vendors will be invited to compete for available projects.

To apply, go to www.ontario.ca/tenders, select Current or Published Opportunities, enter Project Info filter, click Go, enter Tender#, click Search.

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HHSS students created a visual display showing the location of residential schools across Canada, with further information about some of the schools and a way to connect online with stories of survivors. The Grade 9 students are studying works by Indigenous authors in English class./Photo submitted by Christine Carr

HHSS students finding truth behind fiction

by SUE TIFFIN
Editor

While the books being read in Christine Carr's Grade 9 English class are works of fiction, the topics and themes they introduce are leading the students to dig deeper and learn more about residential schools.

After the students read *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline, a science fiction novel set in a post-apocalyptic Canada in which Indigenous people are hunted for their marrow, they created posters using quotes from the book to help bring awareness to the importance of Orange Shirt Day. On the posters, which were hung around the school, they included a QR code [a type of barcode that when scanned can link to more information] that led fellow students and staff at HHSS to websites featuring news articles and stories from survivors of residential schools.

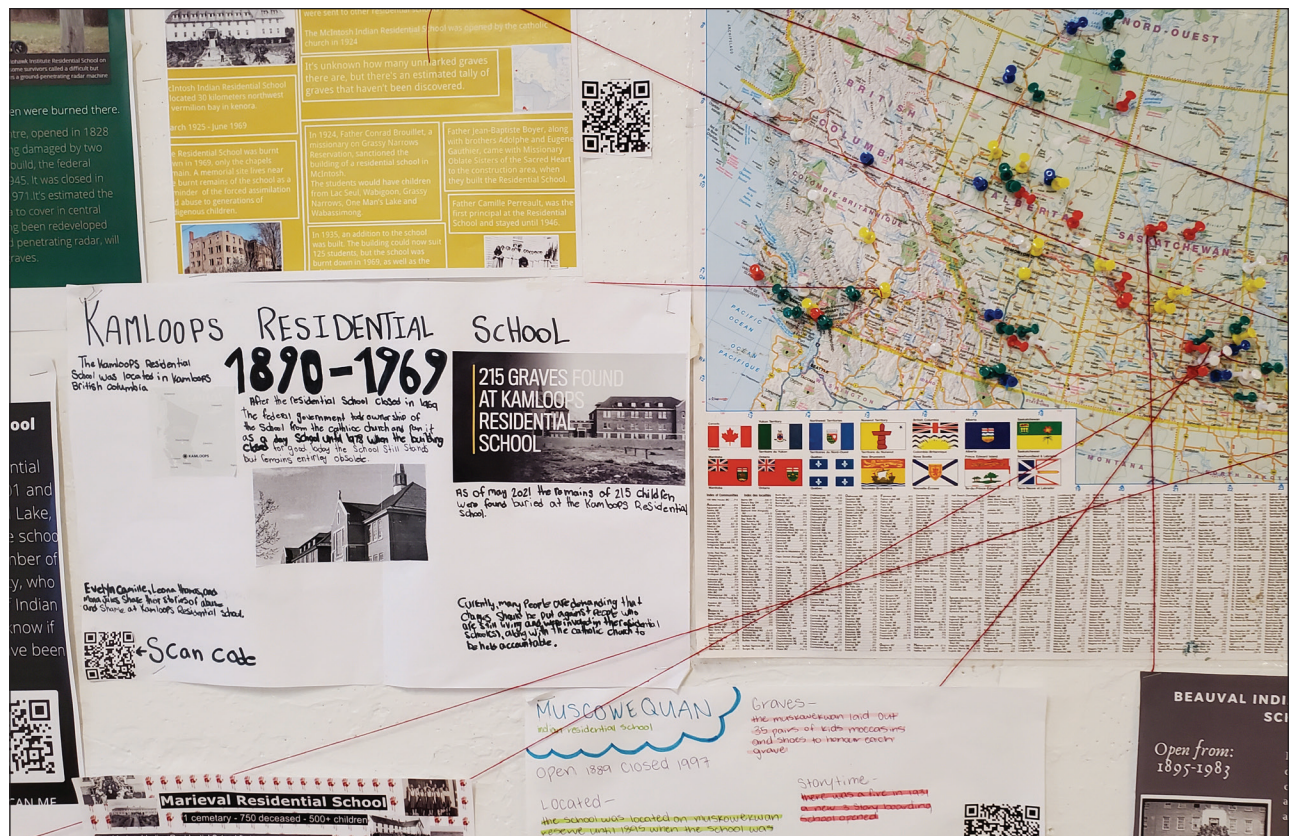
Now, while studying *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, by James Bartleman, which is loosely based on residential schools that existed in northern Ontario, the students have studied residential schools and created an informative display to show what they've learned and help others understand what happened at those schools throughout Canada where unmarked graves are being found.

"A lot of students are surprised by that – they picture the odd one, but then learn they were all over Canada," said Carr. "I think a lot of them have been surprised by how much went on at the schools. They knew the basics, that there were residential schools, that they were not good. We've had that discussion in class, with the role of fiction, and whether or not it's good to tell these kinds of stories. A lot of students have expressed that it really makes it more real for them, even if it's not a real person, you're still getting how they felt, what they went through, and it kind of makes the experience more real. A lot of them have actually said so far that they've learned more about it and have been surprised by how much they've learned, how horrible the trauma was."

Carr, alongside her fellow HHSS teachers and with a school board consultant, have been giving much consideration to which books are studied in class.

"We're really trying to look at all the texts we do in English classes, and really see what the students can get out of them," she said. "A lot of them have different perspectives, and really bring different equity and justice issues rather than the classic texts they might be used to. Within the last few years, a lot of teachers have been trying to incorporate texts by different authors."

Discussions during study of the texts can be difficult, and



Christine Carr, a Grade 9 English teacher at HHSS, said she likes to share the work the students are proud of, such as this project researching residential schools which they created and then shared with staff and students at the high school to help spread awareness. /Photo submitted by Christine Carr

Carr wrote home prior to beginning the book study to let parents know the students would be reading about and talking about difficult topics. Parents were all on board, with some noting they thought it was important to talk about this.

"It can be hard at times, really trying to make sure the classrooms are basically a safe space," she said. "These types of books also come with some difficult topics to talk about. I've found that the students really seem to like learning about things that they feel matter. We talk about the role that youth can play in creating change in the world."

The students are also reading short stories, poems and will read *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare. Carr notes there has been much debate on whether students should continue reading Shakespeare nowadays.

"You can use it as a way to connect with Shakespeare's

time, but a lot of the themes are universal – that's the approach I try to take to it, because there's a lot of things you can still connect to today's world and still learn," she said. "You can learn the impact he made on literature."

Carr said a mix of texts that include contemporary books works well for the students in her class.

"For me I'm just trying to find things that students connect with, and that they walk away feeling they learned something," she said. "Not just, OK, check off another book read. And hopefully it helps inspire them to keep learning and keep growing their own knowledge as well after they leave the classroom. I'm hoping – what I'd love – is that students then seek out books from other authors and different perspectives. Hopefully it helps broadens their reading."

Minden’s Christmas Bird Count to take place Dec. 18

by ED POROPAT
Special to the Times

A blanket of snow across the Haliburton Highlands once again heralds the arrival of the annual Minden Christmas Bird Count. It’s time to get those bird feeding stations stocked. This year, our count will take place on Saturday, Dec. 18, and will mark the 55th consecutive year that this event has occurred.

For those unfamiliar with Christmas Bird Counts, it can seem like a somewhat daunting task.

How does it work? How do you know you haven’t counted the same bird twice? The Christmas Bird Count started way back in 1900 from what was originally a Christmas Day hunt. As the number of birds began to decline, it evolved into a yearly, non-consumptive census instead. This tradition has continued to the present day, with thousands of counts occurring across two continents and tens of thousands of citizen scientists contributing in any manner they can. In order to gain some sense of change, the count is conducted within the same standardized circle every year. Our 24 km count circle includes local communities such as Minden, Lochlin, Gelert, Ingoldsby, Kinmount, Miner’s Bay, and Moore Falls.

The standardized census occurs around the same time frame each year and is limited to a 24-hour period. On one specific day each year, field observers fan out across the designated area (each group with their own “piece of the pie”) and attempt to find and count every bird they can see or hear.

Notes are kept, detailing how much effort is expended (eg. hours on foot, kilometres



An inquisitive Canada jay searches for handouts. /Photo by Ed Poropat

driven, etc.) so the data can be statistically compared to other years in a valid manner. While this is occurring, feeder watchers throughout the count area are also contributing. They record birds visiting their backyard feeding stations and again keep track of the number of hours they spend watching. When the day is done, a quick picture of the local bird diversity and relative abundance can be gleaned. After our count is combined with hundreds of others across the continent, however, we finally obtain some meaningful in-

sights into avian movements, and abundance.

So, what kind of bird life can we expect this winter? Of course, weather and local conditions always play a major role on count day, as well as the days leading up to it. Presently, most of our large lakes are still wide open, with minimal ice-cover. The late freeze-up in the far north has many arctic waterfowl still migrating through our area. Some may linger for our count, especially if the lakes remain open. Loons seem to be tardy with their departure this year. Many are still in the area, fishing and fattening up for their flight south.

Trumpeter swans seem to have taken up winter residence in the past several years. They are now an expected species on our count. Ruffed grouse populations appear to be strong this year. I frequently scare up birds when out walking. Raptors appear to be doing well also. Bald eagles are now a regular sight in the county in winter, and even Peregrine falcons and Cooper’s hawks have been seen recently, hunting pigeons in town.

Every year, birders scan the treetops not only for birds, but also for seed crops. These food sources often help predict what species might be present during the coming months. Some of our conifers have had an abundance of cones this year, especially the spruces. This should encourage some of the northern finches to visit this winter. Common redpolls, both red and white-winged crossbills,

pine siskins, and evening grosbeaks have all been seen or heard in our area recently, although none are particularly common yet.

Most of these birds will remain to the north or east of our area due to an abundance of food there, but others will likely visit in the coming months, taking advantage of our local food sources. American goldfinches seem common this winter. Stocking your feeders with black oil sunflower seeds and/or nyger seed may encourage these northern finches to visit your yards. The abundance of cone seeds in our region also translates into a healthy rodent population. With rodents more common, owls may become more visible, especially around feeding stations. Checking trees and perches carefully around the perimeter of your yard may reveal one of these quiet, beautiful creatures hunting stealthily on your property.

Blue jays seemed to show only a moderate movement this fall. There appear to be a decent number of acorns and beechnuts in our region so most have likely decided to stay for the winter. You can expect them to terrorize your feeders! Canada jays, on the other hand, continue their decline due largely to climate change. Once an expected species on the Minden Count, it is now genuinely a rare bird in the southern part of Haliburton County. Putting out suet might encourage one to spend the winter in your neighbourhood. Consider yourself fortunate if you manage to attract one of these tame and charismatic birds to your yard.

Not all birds will come readily to hanging feeders. Scattering some mixed seed on the ground can also encourage birds such as sparrows, juncos, and even cardinals to visit your yard.

If you would like to participate as a field counter or a feeder watcher, please contact Ed Poropat at 705-457-3018 or email at ed.barb@sympatico.ca. To report birds at your feeder on the day of the count, you can phone me at the above number on Dec. 20. Alternatively, you can e-mail your results to me or mail them to 71 Dean Court, Box 1204, Haliburton, ON, K0M 1S0.

Please send your data in promptly so it can be tallied and included in the report to American

Birds. Species not seen by anyone on Dec. 18, but found on December 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, or 21, will be recorded as Count Week birds. We hope you’ll join us on Dec. 18 to help make the 55th Minden Christmas Bird Count a continued success.

26th Annual Christmas Gathering of toys and food For Haliburton County!

Each year we think the need is greater than the previous and this year isn’t any different! Let’s take a moment and remember what it was like to get that special gift on Christmas morning. Now those who can, need to reach down and lend a hand to those who make Christmas special to those who need that extra hand.

The members of the Haliburton County Home Builders’ Association are willing to pick up and deliver gifts to the “Christmas Workshops”.

Large or small, each gift will help fill the much-needed Christmas hampers distributed by the 4C’s in Haliburton, Minden Community Food Bank and the Central Food Network.

Step 1: Call in advance to the Home Builders’ Office 457-6901, Members of the Home Builders’ Association will pick up your gifts and deliver them to the workshops.

Step 2: Collect unwrapped toys, gift certificates or food items at your home or office.

Remember to make the most of the Challenge have your gifts ready for pick up BEFORE December 10th.

Call 705-457-6901 for more information and to book your gift picked up.

The EarlyON Child & Family Centre is currently seeking Board Members to serve on the Board of Directors.

We are a non-profit agency that is funded by the Ministry of Education to offer programs for children 0- 6 years and their parents, grandparents and caregivers in the City of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County.

- Volunteer commitment of 2 - 4 hours per month
- Presently, virtual meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month - starting at 5:30 p.m.

If interested please contact us
P: 705-324-7900 E: admin@oeyc.ca
www.oeyc.ca

Gifts from the Heart results in gift to the community

by NICK BERNARD
Times Staff

This is the 10th year of SIRCH's Gifts from the Heart, the annual fundraiser that helps fund SIRCH's efforts to address gaps in social and health services in Haliburton County. Since March of 2020, over 35,000 portions of home cooked food have been provided for free to people in need.

SIRCH executive director Gena Robertson says the focus of Gifts from the Heart is on the continued funding of SIRCH's community kitchen, which prepares the food that goes to various organizations in the community.

"It's really about providing food security to individuals in the community who ... really need to have prepared, nutritious food," Robertson explained.

"We have a number of organizations that distribute, because they know their clients," she says, listing off the organizations SIRCH works with, including the Haliburton Highlands Health Services' Meals on Wheels, the Haliburton Youth Hub, and FoodNet.

She says SIRCH's partnerships with organizations like FoodNet have allowed them to place freezers around the county, which makes home cooked meals from SIRCH's kitchen accessible to those in the county who are struggling. The organizations collect the meals from SIRCH, and then distribute them at their locations.

Robertson says about a dozen such freezers are located throughout the county, enabling their work to continue beyond just the town of Haliburton.

She says the need to focus on food stems from the rise in need during the pandemic.

"I think the need skyrocketed, you know, people who were laid off, and isolated, and closed down," she said. While she says the need tapered off a little during the summer, it has since returned as strong as ever. Robertson also attributes the ongoing and increasing vulnerability of people in the community to the rise of food prices and a lack of local transportation.

She also says it's important to get food to people whose



David Copestick, Josh LeBlond, Judith Bamford, and Sarah Hall stand under the sign welcoming people to SIRCH Bistro & Marketplace. Since 2020, SIRCH has cooked 35,000 portions of home cooked meals for those who are in need. /NICK BERNARD Staff

general life circumstances prevent them from accessing food.

"You know, if you're depressed, if you're grieving, if you're palliative, you probably don't want to make food even if you can afford to do it," she said. "So, there's lots of reasons that people would just appreciate a meal."

She says the meals are made by volunteers under the direction of chef Sarah Hall, using only nutritious food.

"It's sort of our gift to the community," Robertson said in characterizing the work SIRCH is doing.

She said providing food to people in need must be done with dignity, which is why the food is given to organizations like the Youth Hub, the YWCA, the City of Kawartha Lakes Housing, and others.

"I don't want someone to come in and feel in any way that they're not equal," she said. "If you need food, you get it

there, where people know you and know that you have that concern."

Robertson says that SIRCH wouldn't be able to complete its work without the support of the community.

"We're just incredibly appreciative because we would not be able to accomplish what we do without the very generous donations of people who support us," she said. "We have a really giving community ... people volunteer here, people help out here, it's a pretty impressive community."

Gifts from the Heart runs from now until Christmas.

People are encouraged to donate to Gifts from the Heart in person, by mail, or online at sirch.on.ca/donate.

Visit any one of SIRCH's Social Enterprises to support their work year-round.

A Christmas Carol comes to your living room

As the joy of bingeing shows on Netflix and Disney Plus dwindles, Highlands Summer Festival is offering a local festive treat: a dramatic reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* by some of your favourite HSF actors.

Mike Jaycock, Myrna McBrien, Curtis Eastmure, Brigitte Gall and the Reverend Ken McClure read the version Dickens himself read to audiences when he toured, according to Scot Denton, who directed the reading. Filmed at St. George's Anglican Church in Haliburton, the show was produced by Tammy Rae, April Kovacs and Luke Young with musicians David Archibald, Bethany Houghton and Melissa Stephens. The one-and-a-half hour show is available for free to stream from the Highlands Summer Festival website at highlandsummerfestival.on.ca anytime from Dec. 5 to 30.

Submitted



Mike Jaycock stands at the lectern to record his portion of the Highland Summer Festival's dramatic reading of *A Christmas Carol*. The production can be streamed on the revamped HSF website. /Submitted



Left, Tammy Rae operates the laptop while cameraperson April Kovacs operates the camera. April won the Media Arts Award last year at HHSS. Tammy and April both took part in the production of the Highland Summer Festival's dramatic reading of *A Christmas Carol*. /Submitted



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holiday fun!

Visit www.canoe.fm to enter.
Draw takes place December 22nd @ 11:30

Land trust looking for environmental heroes

by **STEPHEN PETRICK**
Special to the Times

There are surely environmental heroes walking among us in the community – and the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust wants to hear about them.

The non-profit, environmental charity is calling for nominations for its annual Enviro-Hero Awards.

“These awards serve to recognize and celebrate environmental excellence within our community,” the organization said in a recent statement. “This year we have decided to once again focus on finding the local unsung Enviro-Hero. We will be honouring one adult (or group) and one youth (or group) who has contributed to the protection and sustainability of our natu-

ral resources and environment through their action or initiative, through education or stewardship.”

The organization asks community members who know of people deserving of these awards to get in touch and put nominations forward. They just have to include a short description of the nominee, explain why they are nominating them and add contact information, if available.

To reach the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust call 705-457-3700 or email admin@haliburtonlandtrust.ca.

Nominations close on Tuesday, Dec. 21. One winner in each category will be announced on Wednesday, Dec. 29. The Land Trust then hopes to have an award presentation sometime in the new year, but that will depend on the state of COVID-19 related restrictions.

The annual awards program raises awareness of the importance of local environmental projects and the Land Trust itself.

The trust is an organization that protects and maintains five properties in Haliburton County, which total 12,000 acres of forest and wetlands.

Two of those properties, the Dahl Forest and the Barnam Creek Natural Reserve, are open to the public and have trails for activities such as hiking or cross-country skiing (but not for motorized vehicle use). The Land Trust also covers the Fred and Pearl Barry Wetland Reserve, Norah’s Island and Smith Forest.

While the Land Trust is charged with protecting these properties, Enviro-Hero award nominees are not limited to those who’ve made contributions to these five properties, said Mary-Lou Gerstl, a board member and chairperson of the fundraising committee.

An “Enviro-Hero” could be anyone local who has done something special to contribute to a better environment.

“We call them unsung heroes – people in the community that have contributed to the preservation of the environment through their own actions,” she said.

In selecting award winners, the Land Trust will consider those who have contributed to environmental stewardship, such as conserving or protecting water, flora, fauna or mineral resources. It will also consider those who have organized and delivered environmental education opportunities for children, youth or adults.

Gerstl said the award program has helped the Land Trust honour all kinds of unsung heroes in recent years. Past winners include a property owners association that ran a “Love Your Lakes” program, a group that ran a shoreline restoration program along Gull River, a local beekeeper and youth who planned events to raise awareness of climate change.

She added that, as time goes by, there seems to be more community interest in protecting the environment; likely as a result of the society’s acceptance of climate change. As evidence, she pointed out that the Land Trust is a membership-based organizations, and its members have grown from roughly 150 five years ago to about 190 today.

One of the Land Trust’s main focuses today is preserving wetlands and working to ensure they’re protected from development.

“We’ve seen more and more land owners who have wetlands on their properties, interested in our research programs,” she said. “I think people are becoming very, very concerned. They’re looking at our environment and seeing how beautiful it is today and we want to keep it that way.”

She said the award program is also well received because Haliburton County has a strong environment-loving culture, driven by rural residents who see the importance of preserving nature.

Winners of the awards receive a gift, but it doesn’t come with a financial prize. That is never an issue, Gerstl said, because the people who work on these environmental projects don’t do it for money. Instead, they do it “because it’s the right thing to do.”

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Red Wolves invite athletes, volunteers to the team

by **SUE TIFFIN**
Editor

Dave McKay first became a volunteer when his kids were involved in sports, but he became involved because of volunteers helping him when he was a child himself.

"I got into it mostly because of people who volunteered when I was a kid, or when I was younger, anyway," said McKay. "Our coach on the baseball team was our bus driver. He didn't have any kids of his own but he came out and coached us. Some of the adults around town who played ball would come out and give us some advice, and give us a hand. I kind of remembered that when I was an adult and had kids of my own and felt I could do the same sort of thing."

He's been volunteering for about 50 years now, currently about 10 to 15 hours a week. At least one hour of the week, from October to the end of March, is spent with the Haliburton County Red Wolves curling team.

Having been active his entire life, McKay joined the curling club in Minden after moving here, and in 1997, began volunteering as a coach with the curling program for public school kids. While he was curling, he met members of the Haliburton County Red Wolves team, Haliburton County's Special Olympics athletes, and when Coach Bruce Fisher needed someone to stand in for him in 2012, McKay jumped at the chance.

"I started out helping him, and a year or so later, he was helping me, and that's really how I got introduced to the curling program with the Red Wolves," said McKay.

Four years ago the Red Wolves curling team won the B-provincial championships.

"The Red Wolves themselves really enjoy coming out and doing whatever it is

A photograph of two women standing side-by-side, smiling. They are both wearing light grey polo shirts with a red logo on the left chest that reads "Special Olympics", "Ballwin County", and "Red Wolves". The woman on the left has short, wavy blonde hair and is wearing large white earrings. The woman on the right has short, wavy grey hair and has her right arm around the left woman's shoulder. They are standing in front of a white wall with a wooden frame.

Yvette Brauer and Barb Piercey have been longtime volunteers with the Red Wolves and recently received their 15-year pins. The Haliburton County Red Wolves are looking for more athletes and volunteers to join their team./Photo submitted

they're doing, some of them curl quite well, some of them enjoy being out with the other athletes."

Yvette Brauer, who has been a volunteer with the Red Wolves for 15 years and whose son Trevor is an athlete, said the team is looking for both volunteers and athletes after two challenging years. At first, with the strict pandemic protocols put in place by the Special Olympics Ontario organization, athletes suffered greatly from isolation, made more difficult by the remote area and poor internet access of the Highlands.

"Friendships are so important," said Brauer. "And we're a family."

The Haliburton County team did give bocce ball a try in the summer, given that social distancing protocols could be easily main-

tained outdoors, but golfing was only permitted this past September, and with regular competitions cancelled, the five-pin bowling team has been participating in a virtual competition rather than being able to enjoy the sport in the same way. Not all athletes have returned yet, with the pandemic ongoing, and fundraising opportunities have not been available. The full team has dropped from 35 to about 18 athletes and Brauer is hoping that everyone will return and that others might join, including seasonal residents who might not know of the local team.

"We just want to give everyone an opportunity," said Brauer. "And if they don't

know we're here, they can't join."

For McKay, the experience is personally rewarding, but knowing that he's helping support inclusion in the community is important to him.

"It's a fulfilling thing," he said. "The Red Wolves really enjoy coming out and doing things, so if you can help them in that area I think it's a good thing."

For those interested in playing, coaching, or cheering on curling, five-pin bowling, softball, golf or bocce ball visit haliburton.specialolympicsontario.ca or contact Yvette at ybrauer@bell.net.

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Dawn Piercey prepares her throw at the Curling Club.



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Above, members of the Haliburton County Red Wolves consult their next play for the Special Olympics at the Minden Curling Club at their practice on Monday, Nov. 29. From left, Kim Buie, coach Dave Piercey, Dawn Piercey, coach Dave McKay. /NICK BERNARD Staff

Left, Skylar Pratt shouts to her sweeper as Kim Buie and coach Dave McKay look on during their practice. The Red Wolves are hoping to increase their numbers following the pandemic.

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GARDENS
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Huskies hold on for 3-2 victory over Cougars

by ALEX GALLACHER
Special to the Times

The Haliburton County Huskies fought back from being two goals down to beat the Cobourg Cougars 3-2, Friday night at S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena.

The Cougars opened up the scoring as George Krotiris scored his seventh of the season only four minutes into the match. With an aggressive game taking place the last time these two teams met, the story was more of the same again this time.

Haliburton's Ryan Hall would get into a shoving match with one of the Cougars forwards after Hall's stick was snapped. Big hits and big plays all around the ice, the Cougars would get one more before the period was up.

Zach Smith fanned on his shot attempt but it somehow fooled Christian Cicigoi and ended up in the back of the net. The Huskies headed back to the dressing room down a pair, but the charge back started as soon as the second began.

Cameron Kosurko set up Lucas Stevenson who managed to beat Justin Easter glove side, netting his ninth of the year. The goal lit up the arena, giving the Huskies a much needed spark and cutting the lead in half.

Isaac Sooklal came back from injury and put up some good stats, but Sooklal left Friday's game after taking a hard hit into the boards. He was taken to the Minden Hospital for an evaluation and will hopefully be back in the roster for the Dec. 11 game vs Wellington.

Another Husky who came back from injury was Patrick Saini, having not laced up in nearly a month and a half. Saini made quite a comeback, burying a beautiful feed from Oliver Tarr on the powerplay less than two minutes into the third to tie the game up at two apiece.

Seven minutes later and the Huskies took their first lead of the evening.

Bryce Richardson scored off a pass from Christian Stevens, beating Easter with a powerful snap shot. Hall picked up an assist on the goal and just like that, the Huskies were in front.

The Cougars threw everything they had at the Huskies, but Cicigoi turned it all aside. In the end, the Huskies held on for the 3-2 victory.

"The players did a great job to rebound and delete that first period," head coach Ryan Ramsay said. "If we play the rest of the season like we did the final 40 of this game, I think we will win a lot more games. It was a good effort from the team and a big two points for us tonight."

For Patrick Saini, being able to score in his first game back meant the world to him. Having missed a good chunk of the season, being able to light up the Minden arena never gets old.

"It feels great to finally get back on the ice after being away for so long," Saini said. "Tarr gave me a great pass to get it in front of the net, and I was really happy I was there to pop it in."

With another game winner, Richardson is cementing himself as a key franchise player in the Huskies lineup. He expressed that Cobourg and Haliburton would make an amazing playoff matchup and one he would love to see.

"Just to get the win in general felt great," Richardson said. "This win is huge for the whole team. Cobourg is an aggressive team, sometimes you gotta out rough them, but mostly just play our game and use our skill to win."

The Huskies then headed out to Trenton to take on the Golden Hawks on Sunday. Saini added two more goals as the Huskies defeated the first place Golden Hawks 2-1 and will return to the S.G. Nesbitt memorial arena on Dec. 11 to take on the Wellington Dukes.

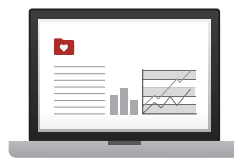


Haliburton County Huskies forward Lucas Stevenson readies to turn up ice to join the play with Cobourg Cougars Erik MacNiel looking on Friday, Dec. 3 at the S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena in Minden. /ALEX GALLACHER Special to the Times

EPIC LAUNCH

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GET TO KNOW THE HUSKIES: RYAN HALL

Ryan Hall scored his first career OJHL earlier this season against the Toronto Patriots on Oct. 27, and since then Hall has been a substantial addition to the Huskies blue line. Adding seven more assists, the Haliburton defenseman has enjoyed his three seasons so far in the league. In this second edition of Getting to Know the Huskies, we will be looking into the journey of one of two local players on the team: Ryan Hall.

Since joining the league in the 2018-19 season, Hall has jumped around to three different teams in his time. Joining the Trenton Golden Hawks as an affiliated player, Hall made the team during the 2019 - 20 season and played 21 games before being shipped off to Lindsay for the final 25 games of the season. Despite not scoring any goals, he tallied seven assists over those 47 games.

Moving to the Whitby Fury for the 2021 - 22 season, when the Fury moved back home to Minden it was a dream come true for Hall.

"I started out in Trenton and was traded to the Muskies before Christmas," Hall said. "I then joined the Whitby Fury and when they became the Huskies it all worked out for me. I get to play at home, in front my family and home fans. So it's been great."

Being able to play for his hometown team is an experience like no other. Hall never thought he would get the opportunity to play high level junior hockey, but when Ryan



"I think I'm having my best season so far," said Ryan Hall, one of two local players on the Haliburton County Huskies. /Submitted photo

Ramsay broke the news to him, there was a party in the Hall household.

Every night, Hall's friends and family are in attendance – an experience not many players in the OJHL get the luxury of having. Players come from far and wide but Hall's family commute is roughly 30 minutes.

"When Ryan Ramsay told me the Huskies were coming home, I was really excited," Hall said. "My family could come to every game, the locals that I know could come and the town is full of big hockey fans so it was a great thing to find out for sure."

Joining the Huskies has been a treat for Hall, as he is having the best season of his career thus far. Scoring his first goal as well as logging seven assists, in one season in Haliburton County he has already matched his totals from both Trenton and Lindsay combined. The first goal meant a lot to Hall as it took him two seasons of hard grinding to finally get that well-deserved result.

"It means a lot, as finally it came after all this time," Hall said. "I think I'm having my best season so far. All the guys have been super supportive, and it's overall been amazing."

Hall feels at home in the Huskies roster, with great teammates and very supportive coaching staff behind him. The dynamic has

been very positive, with a lot of room for personal growth and development.

All the guys on the team seem to get along well with one another, and there hasn't been a weak link on the team all season. Hall credits the mentorship of Coach Ramsay as one of the biggest things helping his growth this season.

"Between Ryan Ramsay and Jordan Bailey, the coaching staff is awesome and I love working with them," Hall said. "All the guys are really close, a lot of us have actually played together growing up and I think this is the most fun I've ever had playing hockey."

The OJHL is viewed as the stepping stone for the next level for a lot of players in the league, but for Hall he has something else in mind for when his playing career is over.

Being only 18 years old, Hall still has a lot of time to plan his future out, but school is on the radar in one form or another.

"Most players in this league plan to go the NCAA or OHL but for me I'm not sure yet what my future holds," Hall said. "I really want to pursue something like firefighting, after the hockey career is done, but at this moment I'm not 100 per cent sure yet."

The Huskies have the honour of being in the top five in league attendance (behind Collingwood, Trenton and Wellington), averaging around 300 + plans per game. For Hall, the support from the town has been unreal and playing in front of these large crowds is unlike anything he has experienced before.

"When you look from the bench and the stands are full, it's an unreal feeling," Hall continued. "I go to some other arenas and there are like 30 fans. There is no hype, no noise, nothing. But here, the fans are always cheering and the support is crazy good!"

When he is not training for games, Hall can usually be found hanging out with friends and family. Devoting a lot of his time to keeping in shape and making sure his on-ice performance is the best it can be, Hall still does like to relax once a while with some video games and dinners with the team.

With the Huskies calling Haliburton County home, the local boys always tend to stand out among the crowd. For Ryan Hall, the local push has helped reach career high numbers and have given him a spark this season. Look for Hall to be defending the blue line each and every game with everything he has.

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Answers on page 18

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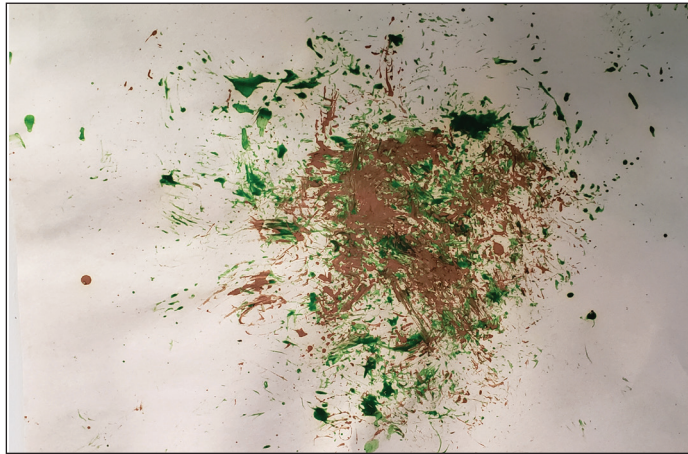
Preschoolers create art inspired by nature

This November, the preschool room at Compass ELC Minden has been making connections between their natural environment and art.

One afternoon, the preschool room used found objects (pine cones, twigs, grass, plants) from their walk that morning to paint with. This gave the children an opportunity to experiment with mark making. During the activity the children tested using the different objects collected as paint brushes and other painting tools. Educators noticed the children layering the two different colours and using the homemade paint brushes to create different types of movement with their stroke, making every art piece unique just like the children creating them.

A few weeks later on a walk the children collected rocks. The children discussed the characteristics of the rocks they had collected. They used great descriptive words like "round, sharp, roll, big," and "small." When the preschoolers got back to the daycare, the educators observed one of the children rolling the rocks in a bucket. The educators were inspired by this and set up an art invitation for the children, where they put the collected rocks into the bucket with paint and paper. The rocks rolled, slid, and hopped through the paint creating different impressions and lines in the paint.

The children were very proud of all of the artwork they had created, displaying it in their classroom as a mini-art gallery.



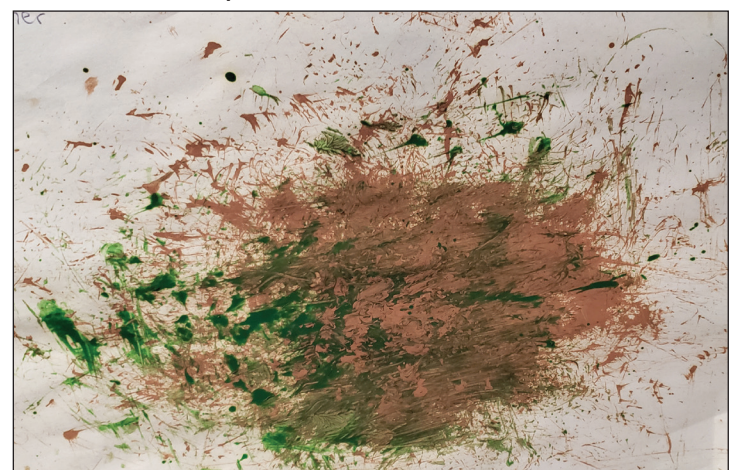
Artwork inspired by nature and created by preschoolers.



Preschoolers rolling rocks around in a bucket inspired educators to set up an "art invitation" for the children.



Children put rocks they had collected outdoors into a bucket with paint and paper.



The rocks rolled, slid and hopped through the paint, creating different impressions and lines across the paper.

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Griswold greetings
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Giving from our hearts to fill the cart
An Archie Stouffer Elementary School student stands with the collection of food from the second day of the school's Giving from our Hearts to Fill the Cart campaign. The food drive for the Minden Community Food Centre began Dec. 3 after being delayed by two inclement weather days at the school. Each day the school challenges students to donate a specific item or items to fill one cart and, so far, students have exceeded that each day up to Dec. 7. The collection, which includes non-perishable food and hygiene products, ends on Dec. 16. /Submitted by Laurie Bowker



Dear Santa
Two-year-old Charlotte Patterson from Minden smiled as she wrote her letter to Santa Claus last week. Letters to Santa sent no later than Dec. 10 will receive a reply before the holidays through a Canada Post Santa letter program. Address letters to Santa Claus, North Pole, H0H 0H0, Canada. / Photo submitted by Leah Thomas

To see your loved ones on this page, send photos to sue@haliburtonpress.com

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Visit our website at www.haliburtoncounty.ca/careers for a detailed posting and job description.

Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than December 17, 2021 at 4:30pm.

We thank all who apply for this position; however only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The County of Haliburton is an equal employer. Accommodation can be provided in all steps of the hiring process, please contact Human Resources for further details.

In accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of job selection.



The Haliburton County Echo and Minden Times are seeking a skilled **Reporter/Photographer** to join an award-winning team of journalists in the heart of Ontario's cottage country.

The preferred candidate will possess the following:

- A diploma or degree in journalism
- Knowledge of or interest in municipal government, as, in addition to general news, the position will entail reporting on the activities of a number of local municipal councils
- Firm command of spelling, grammar and Canadian Press style
- Demonstrated photography and photo editing skills
- Ability to juggle numerous assignments while meeting multiple deadlines
- Willingness to live in Haliburton County
- Must have access to a vehicle and a valid driver's licence
- Required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19

Interested candidates should forward their resume with writing and photography samples to Publisher, David Zilstra by

Friday, December 10th

david.zilstra@haliburtonpress.com

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Deadline 4 pm Monday

400 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY



Haliburton Highlands Health Services has a need for Full-Time, Part-Time (Permanent and/or Temporary) and Casual staff for the noted classifications below.

RN's and RPN's are expected to be available for both Minden and Haliburton Hospital locations. In addition, opportunities are available in our two Long Term Care facilities, Hyland Wood and Hyland Crest. The **Registered Nurse** earns \$33.90 /hr - \$48.53/hr and is responsible for providing comprehensive care to patients, with predictable and unpredictable outcomes who may or may not be clinically stable. The successful candidate will possess a diploma/degree in Nursing and a current Certificate of Competence from the College of Nurses of Ontario. Two years of acute care practice and one year or more of previous emergency department or specialty department experience is preferred. **Temporary accommodation will be provided.**

Registered Practical Nurses earn \$30.58 - \$31.75/hr and provide client care in accordance with the Professional Standards of the College of Nurses of Ontario. She or he, as a member of the health care team, has a significant role in promoting health, preventing illness, and helping clients attain and maintain the highest level of health possible in situations in which a client's condition is relatively stable, less complex and the outcomes of care are predictable. RPN's must have a diploma in Nursing, a Current Certificate of Competence from the College of Nurses of Ontario, current BCLS. Must have a demonstrated knowledge of RPN scope of practice, excellent organization and prioritization skills and an ability to fully communicate in English.

Personnel Support Workers earns \$22.25 - \$24.85/hr and provide resident care in relation to activities of daily living. PSW's help residents attain and maintain the highest level of health possible in situations in which a resident's condition is relatively stable, less complex and the outcomes of care are predictable. Successful completion of Personal Support Worker program which meets one of the following:
The vocational standards established by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities,
The standards established by the National Association of Career Colleges, or
The standards established by the Ontario Community Support Association; and
Must be a minimum of 600 hours in duration, counting both class time and practical experience.

Interested: Submit your application and resume to:

Human Resources
Haliburton Highlands Health Services
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In Loving Memory of
Nancy Marguerite Stinson (nee Easton)
Passed away peacefully at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre on December 5, 2021.

Loving wife of Michael. Cherished mother of Lance (Debbie), Ryan (Lindsey), and Shannon. Nana to Brooke, Mikayla, Katie, Alex and Christopher. Predeceased by her parents Lance and Marguerite Easton. Sister of Michael (Cheryle), Eleanor (Ron), and sister in law to Lynda Easton.

A Celebration of Life will take place at a later date. Cremation has taken place.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.



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LOOK INSIDE



Christmas magic

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Season's Greetings



The happiest girl

Amanda Lytle has had an amazing four months in Argentina.

See page 4



On to regionals

HHSS boys curling team is on the button at zone playdowns.

See page 20



One antler short

This buck lost an antler this week but he's still mighty handsome.

See page 14

In Quotes

'How old are you? Are you 95? I am 7 years old. I love you Santa.'

Kyle Grozelle asks Santa a few questions in this year's Season's Greetings supplement



Holiday happiness

Grade 3 Archie Stouffer Elementary School student Melissa Stiver lets out a scream while coming down the playground slide with friend Aurora-Lee Acorn. School children were giddy with anticipation of Christmas Day and took advantage of the snow on the school's property.

'Most important election', says Liberal

by LANCE CROSSLEY
Times Staff

Liberal candidate Greg Walling told voters that this will be the

most important election in recent history because of the social possibilities presented by federal government surpluses. Where those surpluses are directed, said

Walling, will greatly depend on the party in power.

"Having input on how that money is spent is more important

see WHEN page 8

Budget up, tax rate down

Algonquin Highlands tries to make everyone happy with 2006 projections

by BRYN WEESE
Times Staff

It is budget time in the county and as both municipalities and the county try to find ways to do more with less, the Township of Algonquin Highlands unveiled a sneak peak at its 2006 budget and, so far, the news is good.

With a projected increase of only 3.7 per cent over the 2005 budget, both the township's CAO Lorne Mitchell and council are very pleased.

"This is a good news budget," says Mitchell. "I'm thrilled to death that it [the increase] represented only 3.73 per cent."

"This is a bare-bones, actual-needs budget," Mitchell added to council last Thursday when the preliminary budget was unveiled.

The modest increase in expenditures should represent a sigh of relief to ratepayers given the upsurge of property value assessments this fall. The modest budget increase actually translates into a decrease of the municipal tax rate of 24.31 per cent.

The impact of such a decrease, however, is complex.

Of note, said Algonquin Highlands Reeve Eleanor Harrison, is that this represents only the municipality's portion of the property tax. The entire property tax is a culmination of three variables: the municipal tax rate as well as the county tax rate and

see ASSESSMENT page 11

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Denise LeBlanc

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**December 18 @ 4:30 p.m.
vs the Cobourg Cougars**

**December 31 @ 2:00 p.m.
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